



UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY
REGION IX
75 Hawthorne Street
San Francisco, CA 94105

Northeast Church Rock
Engineering Evaluation and Cost Analysis (EE/AA)

Comment Form

1. We are concerned that the cost estimates are based on taking the wastes more than 1,500 miles for disposal. Are there not off-site disposal facilities that are closer? What would be the impacts of on the roads (Routes 566 and 491) from waste transportation? How would residents, pedestrians and livestock be affected? How long will the entire clean-up project take to complete? What is the plan for the residents? What is the Health Impact on the Residences, Livestock?
"NO WIN situation"

We want OFF-SITE removal of mine waste!



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The Red Water Pond Road Community Association was **founded April 7, 2007**, two days after Navajo Nation officials told us that some of our families would have to temporarily move while USEPA removed radioactive soil from around our homes. Some of our families live within 500 feet of the Northeast Church Rock Mine, the USEPA's highest priority abandoned uranium mine on the Navajo Nation. Others in our community live near the former United Nuclear Corp. uranium mill tailings facility, which is a federal Superfund site and the site of the worst uranium waste spill in U.S. history.

Many of us are part of the same extended family that has lived in the area for seven generations — long before the uranium mines came. We take our name from the Navajo road that serves our community, and which itself has been found to be contaminated with radioactive mine wastes. Our members are families in the Red Water Pond Road, Pipeline Road and Old Churchrock Mine Road areas. In addition to suffering from ill health from working in the mines, many of our members **suffer from environmentally induced post-traumatic stress disorder (AUM PTSD/PTSS) from simply *living* in a contaminated area.**

1. After **Site restoration**, we would like to have: Monitoring of Air, Water, Vegetation (Plants) and Grounds after the reclamation for "Long-Term Protection" of Human Health for many more generation.

Removal of all mine wastes to **off-site** disposal facility and removal of all mine wastes to UNC uranium mill tailings disposal facility in Section 2, T16N, R16W; are the only two reclamation alternatives that are consistent with our communities' objectives to remove all wastes and contamination from the NECR Mine Site.

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Engineering Evaluation/Cost Analysis (EE/CA) for cleanup of the Northeast Church Rock Mine — the highest priority abandoned uranium mine on the Navajo Nation. Based on our initial review, we have three immediate requests of USEPA Region 9:

1. Grant an extension of the comment period on the EE/CA from July 13 to October 13, 2009.
2. Schedule and hold public information meetings and public hearings in Churchrock Chapter and in the city of Gallup, N.M.
3. Place copies of the EE/CA and other supporting documents in additional repositories, specifically at the Pinedale Chapter House, Coyote Canyon Chapter House, Churchrock Chapter House and Mariano Lake chapter houses and at the New Mexico Environment Department in Santa Fe.

Residents of the Red Water Pond Road community and their neighbors in surrounding chapters actively participate in MASE and sought MASE's assistance in responding to the release of the EE/CA. MASE intends to deliver this letter to you at the public meeting at Pinedale Chapter on June 23, and we will provide testimony at the July 7 public hearing. For now, we offer the following reasons for these requests:

First, the original 30-day comment period is far too short for the affected communities to provide informed comments. That EPA has been working on the EE/CA for two to three years is immaterial. This is the first opportunity for the public to comment on the clean-up plan, and one month is simply too little time for the public to review and understand the clean-up alternatives. Furthermore, the principles of environmental justice require early and frequent participation of affected communities; the 30-day comment period thwarts this objective.

Second, the clean-up plan could affect a much larger segment of the local community than simply the Red Water Pond Road and Pipeline Road areas. If Alternative 2 is chosen, the entire Route 566 corridor from the mine site to Old Route 66 at Church Rock Village would be affected by several years of increased traffic of trucks hauling contaminated materials from the site. The truck traffic could affect the east side of the city of Gallup if the waste trucks take Exit 26 on Interstate 40. The communities of Iyanbito Chapter and Ft. Wingate would be affected if waste trucks are routed east on Old Route 66 to Interstate 40 at Exit 33. Furthermore, residents of the area say that few people who live near Rt. 566 have any information on the possibility that waste trucks would be traveling past their homes and businesses. Meetings and hearings in these communities are needed to properly inform and obtain participation from the affected residents. Even if EPA's preferred alternative, 5A, is selected, the larger community could be affected by the off-site and out-of-region transportation and disposal of the higher radiation wastes. Alternative 5A would create an even larger permanent radioactive waste disposal facility than already exists at the United Nuclear Corp. uranium mill tailings facility.

Third, wider distribution of the draft EE/CA is critical to informing the public about the cleanup. MASE stands firm in its support for addressing the Uranium Legacy by cleaning up abandoned uranium mines, restoring polluted water supplies and conducting needed population health studies. But government must fully inform the affected communities about all remediation plans before decisions are made. We do not believe that EPA has done this effectively for the NECR Mine cleanup.

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We are for OFF-SITE removal of mine waste!



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1. Since the UNC tailings will remain forever in our community, General Electric/UNC and USEPA must do everything possible to reduce our residents' exposures to contaminated materials during and after reclamation. Toward this goal, we request that USEPA include cost estimates for:
 - a. Replacing Red Water Pond Road homes now located in the contaminated "Step Out" area north of the NECR Mine Site with new homes built on new locations about 1 to 1.5 miles west toward the mouth of the canyon. This should be accomplished before reclamation of NECRM starts to avoid exposing residents to contaminated dusts from excavation and construction activities. How many families are being effected? We have submitted our relocation option.
 - b. Abandoning the current **alignment of Pipeline Road** through the UNC tailings area in Sections 2 and 36 and creating a new alignment for Pipeline Road by extending State Rt. 566 north from the current westward bend in the highway to a line that would connect Red Water Pond Road east of the Grace Cowboy residence. This would involve building a permanent bridge over Pipeline Arroyo and upgrading (i.e., paving) both Pipeline Road and Red Water Pond Road. Currently, residents of the Pipeline Road community must continually cross contaminated lands to get to and from their homes, and when the portion of Pipeline Road that passes through UNC's tailings area is impassable due to mud and arroyo flows, come in direct contact with contaminated materials. This is an unnecessary and unjust public health hazard.

We want OFF-SITE removal of mine waste!



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1. We request that USEPA consider returning the NECR Mine Site wastes to the underground stopes of the mine as a disposal option. We know that the mine has flooded and this would require dewatering of the underground workings. But we also think that these wastes should be returned to the Earth from which they came.
2. We are very disappointed with some of the proposal that does not mention the number of people who live in the affected communities. We estimate that 250 to 300 people live in within two miles of the NECR Mine Site and UNC mill and tailings disposal area. This area also includes Pinedale Chapter and the residences along Rt. 566 south of the mill site.
3. Any disposal option that does not include a **state-of-the-art** multi-barrier liner system is **unacceptable**.
What kind of liner? *lining?*

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1. Continuous air monitoring must be conducted during all clean-up activities and Monitoring of Air, Water, Vegetation (Plants) and Grounds after the reclamation for **"Long-Term Protection"** of Human Health.
2. A local resident or two should be trained, certified and paid to observe all clean-up activities. General Electric/UNC should hire local individuals as clean-up workers, subject to proper training and health and safety protection. An outreach educational program on the effect of Uranium waste should be created to show the rest of the Navajo Nation what is being done at the NECR Mine Site and how its results will benefit clean up of abandoned mines in other areas of the Navajo Nation and the Grants Mineral Belt. A community center could be built in an uncontaminated area to serve an Educational Center with roads and a meeting facility.

We want OFF-SITE removal of mine waste!

after Restoration

water has been contaminated
is it possible to de-contaminate



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1. Revegetation of the effect area and the mine site will not be successful unless the area receives enough water and care. Some of us have seen how revegetation of the Jackpile Mine at Laguna Pueblo has been largely unsuccessful. The Residential Time-Critical Removal Action (TCRA) revegetation was unsuccessful. We want to be included in post-reclamation care for the land. A water supply sufficient to sustain vegetative growth should be installed at the site.
2. We want assurances that enough money will be available for the full completion of this project. We do not want to be informed in three or four years that the money has run out, but the job is not yet completed. UNC left its mess for us to live with for more than 25 years, and we want assurances that this won't happen again.

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After Site restoration:

We would like to have:

Monitoring of Air, Water, Vegetation (Plants) and Grounds after the restoration for **“Long-Term Protection” of Human Health** for many more generation.

Annual report back to communities or Public hearing for the Navajo Nation.

As stated in the US EPA announces Public Release of Engineering Evaluation and Cost Analysis and announcement of 30-day Public Comment period. USEPA has developed a cleanup plan to address potential exposure risk to Human Health.

We want OFF-SITE removal of mine waste!

*monitoring of air, ground, water, plants
after Restoration*



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Our Vision is

The Red Water Pond Road Community envisions a respectful, peaceful community enjoying a healthy environment.

Message from "Ground Zero"

1. We discussed whether there is any other local site that we would agree could be used as a place to permanently dispose of the NECRM wastes. We considered Section 4 (T16N, R16W), located southwest of the current mine site and under the jurisdiction of the Federal Government (Bureau of Land Management). However, we decided that Section 4 is not acceptable because many community members use this land for wood gathering, gathering of herbs and plants for traditional purposes, **Scares sites** and for **traditional ceremonies**. Plus, this land is very close to our existing communities. We desire to reduce the number of permanent radioactive waste sites in and near our communities; the total number of waste sites would be reduced by one.
2. Ideally, we'd like to have wastes at the Kerr-McGee (Quivira Mining Co.) Church Rock 1 and 1E mine included in the reclamation options to reduce the total number of dump sites to one, the UNC tailings facility.

We want OFF-SITE removal of mine waste!

*When will it be safe to use the plants?
For traditional ceremonies*



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**Conduct Comprehensive Studies of Health Conditions
among populations in uranium-impacted communities**

I have talk to some of your family members to "fill in the holes" of the story, which definitely has some gaps. Some of the questions I've asked are about basic facts, and **some are more philosophical, about the big picture issue: the cultural impact of mining.**

I have an outline of what I've been calling "**Long-Term Protection**": I've been writing and rewriting to try to find the best way to explain to people **how this mining industry impacts the community, psychologically and culturally.** And, after a lot of thinking, I am considering beginning the story with my grand-daughter being the 7th generation (I think) to live on this land, and the fact that she's chosen not to continue living there. **The fact that she was worried enough to move out of the area because of the health concerns tells us a lot about the dilemma your family faces. And it also shows the sacrifice -- the ways in which living in a tribal housing community is different from living among family in a more traditional Navajo way.** Painting a picture of that contrast -- the difference that the 12 miles makes between Church Rock and Redwater Pond Rd. -- will help people understand that tradeoff between health and family/culture connections.

This is an example:

After describing the dilemma that my grand-daughter and her generation face, I'm going to go into history. I'm going to talk about uranium mining as one in a series of cultural and psychological traumas suffered by Navajo people, and the cause-effect between some of these events, such as the Long Walk, and the government Livestock Reduction Program in the 1930s and 40s. I think Livestock Reduction is important, because it explains a big reason why large numbers of Navajos had to leave their ancestral lands and go to work at wage jobs instead of the traditional lifestyle -- what I'm learning is that once the herds were reduced and grazing permits issued, there just wasn't always enough livestock for families to be self-sufficient anymore without seeking outside work. That seems to have coincided with World War II and then the beginning of the mining industry, which became two big opportunities for that outside work. But what was the result? Families were separated. Parents went off to work, kids lived with grandparents and went to boarding school and then often had to go far from home to find work themselves. That's basically the story that parents told me about his own childhood, and I'll talk about that in my story because it gets us deeper into the history of this land. What I don't know yet is whether other family was directly affected by the Livestock Reduction Act. Do you know? Anyway,.....

Finally, I'll talk about how the contamination from the mining industry continues to affect culture to this day, getting into some of the specific examples that you - as well as Nathan and Darien - talked about when I was there. This is a very general outline -- of course there is much, much more to it than this, and my job is to bring all of those important details together in a way that is smooth and clear. I'm also working on a whole other section about the opposing argument on future mining -- the people who think that mining is good for the local economy and argue that it will keep young people close to home instead of having to go off-reservation in search of work. I'm also going to include some voices from the surrounding communities, and ideas to promote economic development through more environmentally sound, culturally respectful industries.

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Appreciate the concern for communities who are effected by the Church Rock mine tailings. and for the multidisciplinary cooperation between various organizations and department.

updated reports and studies are nice as well as being made aware of where they can be obtained.



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The Pinedale chapter is downwind from the uranium spill plus all the contaminants that may have been transported back & forth. All studies should include our community which is 9 miles long east of Hwy 566 as we have had people die from cancer and leukemia. Studies should also include the Pinedale area aquifer to see if there's been, or will be, seepage from the cells.